

OVER

**1 Million Dollars**

**A DAY**

*Police Reform Organizing Project  
December 2014*



**PROP's Newest Short-Report**

.....  
New York City Spends Over One Million Dollars A Day  
on Misdemeanor Arrests

NYPD Arrest Practices Continue to Target Low-Income  
People of Color for Petty Infractions

Despite de Blasio's Campaign Promises, the NYPD  
Continues the Biased Arrest Practices of the Bloomberg /  
Kelly Years

.....

**THE COST OF "BROKEN-WINDOWS" POLICING**

DAILY

**648 arrests**

**=**

**\$1,134,000**



WEEKLY

**4,536 arrests**

**=**

**\$33,993,750**



\*All misdemeanor arrests = low-level, non-violent infractions

**PROP**  
Police Reform Organizing Project

# Over A Million Dollars A Day:

## The Daily Waste of the NYPD's Misdemeanor Arrest Practices

PROP has analyzed and compared NYPD arrest statistics<sup>1</sup> for the first nine months of 2013 and 2014 and reached these findings:

- Figures for the first nine months of 2014 show that the NYPD makes:
  - an average of **648** misdemeanor arrests per day at the daily cost to the city of **\$1,134,000**<sup>2</sup>.
  - an average of **4,536** misdemeanor arrests per week at the weekly cost to the city of **\$7,938,000**.
  - an average of **19,425** misdemeanor arrests per month at the monthly cost of **\$33,993,750**.
- For the first nine months of 2014, de Blasio / Bratton's NYPD has continued the same focus as the Bloomberg / Kelly administration on arrests for misdemeanors and other low-level infractions – over 70% of the NYPD's adult arrests are for

---

<sup>1</sup> NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, NEW YORK CITY MISDEMEANOR ARRESTS BY TOP CHARGE AND RACE-ETHNICITY: JANUARY-AUGUST 2013 v 2014, Computerized Criminal History system, 22 March 2014.  
<http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/crimnet/ojsa/dispos/nyc.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> In March 2011, the Drug Policy Alliance published “\$75 Million A Year”, which was prepared by Harry G. Levine and Loren Siegel of the Marijuana Arrest Research Project. Levine is a professor of sociology at Queens College and Siegel is an attorney and consultant who was for many years the director of public education for the American Civil Liberties Union. Here is what Levine and Siegel wrote in that report to explain how they came up with the estimated cost of \$1500 per each marijuana possession arrest: “The premier study of the cost of arrests and prosecutions is a 180-page report, The Comparative Costs And Benefits Of Programs To Reduce Crime. It was prepared in 2001 by Aos, Phipps, Barnoski, and Lieb for the Washington State Institute for Public Policy. The study calculated average police and court costs per arrest for a number of crime categories in all jurisdictions in the state of Washington. For a misdemeanor arrest, police costs were \$764 and court costs were \$336, for a total of \$1,100 – in 1995 dollars. This would be over \$1,500 in 2010 dollars in Washington State. Since the cost of living is higher in New York City, it seems reasonable to conclude that the police and court costs for a single misdemeanor arrest in New York City is by now at least \$1,500 to over \$2,000. This covers all police time including overtime pay for arresting officers and supervisors, all pre-arraignment jail costs, and all court expenses”. Given that this analysis applied to arrest costs 4 years ago, we at PROP concluded that a midway figure of \$1,750 per arrest would represent a fair, even conservative estimate for 2014. Another factor reassuring us that \$1,750 per misdemeanor arrest is a reasonable estimate is that the total annual cost to the city of the NYPD's misdemeanor arrests then comes to \$411,001,500 (234,858 × \$1,750), \$1,134,000 per day. As high as it is, this figure is still less than 10% of the \$4,687,000,000 annual budget of the NYPD.

misdemeanors. From January through September 2013, the NYPD made **173,625** misdemeanor arrests. During 2014's same nine month period, the NYPD made **174,823** misdemeanor arrests.

- A stark racial bias marks the NYPD's petty arrest practices. In 2013, **87%** of the individuals charged with misdemeanors were people of color; in 2014, the figure has been **86.2%**.
- For some arrest categories, the racial bias is even more disproportionate; for example, the percentage of misdemeanor marijuana arrests involving people of color in 2013: **89.9%**; in 2014: **90.4%**. The percentage of misdemeanor trespass arrests involving people of color in 2013: **89.1%**; in 2014: **89.4%**. The percentage of theft of service misdemeanor arrests – “theft of service” usually applies to fare-beating infractions – involving people of color in 2013: **91.2%**; in 2014: **88.4%**.
- The NYPD's arrest practices for more serious offenses also reveal a stark racial bias. In 2013, the percentage of people charged with felonies who are black was **49.8%**; in 2014, the percentage of felony arrestees who are black has been **51.2%**.
- As previously reported, from **2009 to 2013**, a five year period, NYC averaged about **230,000** misdemeanor arrest dispositions per year. Of that number, an annual average of about **10%** of the persons charged did time, meaning in most cases, that they served a jail term of several days, weeks, or months. Conversely, during that time, an annual average of approximately **90%** of the people charged walked out of the courtroom for various reasons ranging from the prosecutors declining prosecute to the court dismissing their case to their being sentenced to probation or time served.

### **PROP Principal Points**

Drawing on these findings, PROP presents the following conclusions:

- At the cost of **more than \$1 million per day**, the NYPD expends considerable resources on a failed, counterproductive misdemeanor arrest strategy.

- Despite Mr. de Blasio's campaign promises, the de Blasio/Bratton administration continues the biased arrest practices of the Bloomberg/Kelly tenure.
- Petty charges against people of color continue to stand out in the picture presented by NYC's misdemeanor arrest numbers.
- The NYPD's current commitment to broken windows policing conflicts in spirit and substance with Mayor de Blasio's clearly sincere pledges to address NYC's racial, social, and economic inequities. **"Broken windows" policing is the "Tale of Two Cities" writ large** – our mayor cannot make progress in resolving those problems without moving the NYPD away from the current aggressive and punitive approach to collaborative, community-oriented policing.